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ABSTRACT

Transfer (i.e., the movement of students and of their academic credits from one school to another) and articulation (i.e., services for transfer students) can no longer be thought of solely in terms of the linear progression of community college students to four-year institutions. While definitions and counting procedures vary considerably among institutions and states, several categories of transfer students can be roughly identified: (1) articulated vertical transfers, who move in regular sequence from high school to community college to university; (2) reverse transfers, who move from a four-year college to a two-year college; (3) vocational transfers, who move to a senior institution as a career/occupational degree candidate; (4) lateral transfers, who move from one community college to another; (5) international transfers, who transfer from a foreign institution; and (6) nontraditional transfers, including adults who return to college after years of "stopping out," applicants who received earlier training at a proprietary school, and applicants from educational programs in industry or government. Valid articulation/transfer agreements will depend on further research into the development of uniform identification and counting systems that can be used by all institutions in identifying and tracking various types of transfer students. (EJV)

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CLEARINGHOUSE FOR JUNIOR COLLEGES

ERIC DIGEST

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The Multidimensional Problem of Articulation and Transfer

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JC 870 465

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Transfer (the movement of students and of their academic credits from one school to another) and articulation (services for the transfer student) are multidimensional community college phenomena. While problems related to standard course and credit transfer are minimal, and the adaptability of lower division work toward upper division requirements is much improved, community colleges must now give concerted effort to solving problems related to extrainstitutional or experiential learning, external or distance education, international education (foreign students), and transfer relations with area vocational schools and postsecondary proprietary institutions. Indeed, transfer and articulation can no longer be thought of solely in terms of the linear progression of community college students to four-year institutions.

Who Are Today's Transfer Students?

While precise definitions and counting procedures vary considerably among institutions and states, several categories of transfer students can be roughly identified. These diverse student types and the special problems they pose are discussed below.

Articulated Vertical Transfers, those who move in regular sequence from high school to community college to the university, are the most visible community college transfer students. Indeed, both interinstitutional and statewide articulation agreements are geared to these traditionally-aged "regulars." With the acceptance of associate degrees as transfer currency, attention now needs to be turned to the other two types of "regulars:" fully-enrolled students who transfer prior to associate degree completion and those seeking to transfer occasional courses. Policies regarding these types of transfer students are not consistent or uniform.

The reverse transfers, those who move from a four- to a two-year college, became increasingly visible in the 1970's. In California, for example, Kissler (1980) found that 10,000 students entered the California Community Colleges from the university system in Fall 1979. Despite the recognition of their numbers,however, there has been a critical lack of attention given the "drop-downs" once they are enrolled. Few colleges provide re-orientation, personal counseling, and special career advising. In addition, advanced standing credit is rarely provided for the baccalaureate degree holder who turns to a community college for training in a more salable career area. Clearly, more research is needed to determine the characteristics and aspirations of reverse transfers. The study by Slark (1982) which examines the educational interests and matriculation patterns of these students at Santa Ana College (CA), is a step in the right direction.

The vocational transfer, one who moves to a senior institution as a career/occupational degree candidate, has received considerable attention of late, partially because of the expansion of occupationally oriented curricula at senior institutions. While few statewide pacts carry policies on vocational education transfer, interinstitutional agreements are spreading rapidly. The most popular arrangement is a joint degree program between one or more community colleges and a university. Ohio institutions, for example, have long practiced an "upside down" plan under which the vocational segment of the baccalaureate program is handled by the university, and the general

education portion is handled by the community college. Another collaborative style now emerging combines the efforts of community colleges with nearby industries or propietary schools. Under the common market philosophy at John Wood Community College (IL), for example, vocational students take math and English courses at the college, while training in electronics technology takes place at the Broadcast products division of the Harris Corporation.

The lateral transfers, i.e., those who transfer from one community college to another, make up what is perhaps the largest and least-accomodated group of transfer students. Indeed, given the lack of attention paid to these students, it may in some instances be harder to move between two-year colleges than it is to move from the two-year college to the university. Additional work in this area is clearly needed.

The international (foreign) transfer adds a most difficult dimension to articulation and transfer. Because many of these students matriculate without sufficient communications skills, colleges are beginning to recognize the need to provide foreign students with comprehensive articulation services including orientation, testing, counseling, and language instruction. Faced also with the problem of evaluating foreign credentials for academic credit, colleges are beginning to use the services of private agencies that specialize in international education credit evaluation and transfer. To date, however, comprehensive services to foreign students are provided at only a few community colleges.

One final category, **nontraditional transfers**, includes a variety of students: the adult who return after years of "stopping out," the applicant who has received earlier training at a proprietary school, and applicants from educational programs in industry or government. Policies on extrainstitutional or experiential learning are difficult to negotiate, because faculties must reach agreement as to (1) exactly what extracollegiate learning will be counted toward the award of academic credit, and (2) how this learning can be properly documented. Assistance in these matters can be found in two publications of the American Council on Education: The National Guide to Credit Recommendations for Noncollegiate Courses, 1979, and the Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services, 1980. In addition, several ERIC documents detail procedures used by community colleges in documenting experiential learning.

What Are the Implications of the Diverse Transfer Student Population for Educational Research and Policy?

Clearly, transfer and articulation are complex phenomena involving a variety of students moving between traditional and nontraditional segments of postsecondary education. Valid articulation/transfer agreements will depend on further research into the development of uniform identification and counting systems that can be used by all institutions in identifying and tracking various types of transfer students. In addition, we must clarify the role of nontraditional postsecondary education, and then establish viable relationships between traditional institutions and the noncollegiate organizations now serving large numbers of adult students. While some may stay on the conservative side, others will push to extend programs and services for categories of students heretofore neglected.

Additional Readings

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A Student Guide to Receiving Credit for Lifelong Learning, Volume I. Dayton, OH: Sinclair Community College, 1980. 95p. (ED 196 479)

Numerous other journal articles and ERIC documents discuss articulation and transfer problems. For further information, contact the User Services Specialist, ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, 8118 Math Sciences Bldg.; UCLA; Los Angeles, CA 90024. The Clearinghouse phone number is (213) 825-3931.

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